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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000620

SIPDIS

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FOR DRL ASSISTANT SECRETARY LOWENKRON FROM AMBASSADOR HOAGLAND
STATE ALSO FOR P, S/P, SCA/CEN, EUR/ACE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR
TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY

REF: DUSHANBE 0283

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¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.
Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) Dear Assistant Secretary Lowenkron: I would like to
solicit your help in advancing democracy in Tajikistan. See
request in para eight.

¶3. (U) Tajikistan's next presidential election will be in
November 2006. At Embassy Dushanbe, the Political and Public
Affairs Sections and USAID have developed a joint election
strategy (septel), "Reform from Above, Foster Interest Below."
Both parts are essential - the "above," and the "below." This
message focuses on one key element of the "above."

¶4. (U) Tajikistan's 2005 parliamentary election was a step
forward but did not meet international standards. Even though
the election was reasonably well conducted and the Tajik voters
took their civic duties quite seriously, even in the most remote
parts of the country, the OSCE/ODHIR Election Observers
Mission's final report enumerated many flaws which, in the
aggregate, prevented the election from meeting international
standards.

¶5. (SBU) However, we know Tajik officials of good will, at high
levels, who want to improve the next election. Although they do
not control the political environment facing any opposition
candidate, they are in a position to make significant
improvements to the electoral process, thus laying an important
foundation for future elections. To that end, the International
Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) in Dushanbe has already
been working intensively with the Central Commission for
Elections and Referenda (CCER) and the President's Strategic
Research Center (SRC) to identify what needs to be improved and
to achieve agreement from the government to make these
improvements.

¶6. (SBU) The government has already agreed in principle to
employ finger-inking to reduce the chances for multiple voting,
and - even more surprising - has agreed in principle to issue an
edict allowing non-partisan Tajik election observers (i.e.,
members of NGOs and civic organizations), even though the
current Presidential Election Law makes no provision for such

observers.

17. (SBU) Starting with the flaws listed in the 2005 OSCE/ODHIR report, and using three key documents that set forth expectations - the OSCE Copenhagen document, the CIS Convention on Free and Democratic Elections, and the Election Law of the Republic of Tajikistan - IFES, CCER, and SRC working together have identified the following areas that are of concern and have pledged to find solutions for each:

Proxy voting, family voting, multiple voting

Counting of ballots and adhering to protocol procedures

Interference by local officials and presence of uniformed police officials

Low female and ethnic minority participation

Interference in the registration of candidates

Delaying or denying accreditation of observers

Voter registration

Use of pencils rather than pens for protocol reports

Paucity of CCER public meetings before the election

Manipulation and misuse of the mass media

Early voting, mobile voting, and absentee voting

Low level of civic education

Complaints and appeals processes

18. (SBU) IFES Washington will submit a proposal to the

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Department within the next two weeks to allow IFES Tajikistan to continue this vital work. IFES Tajikistan's existing USAID grant expires in September. [NOTE: This could not be an extension of IFES' current USAID grant which is for civic education but not/not elections. END NOTE.] Unless it receives new funding for this election work, IFES will go into close-out mode in June. We recognize that budgets are especially tight, but we would ask that DRL, or some other element, fund this proposal as soon as it is received. Without IFES' continued engagement, this effort will fall by the wayside. The key players who will set the tone and standards for the election are on board for the moment, and we must cement their commitment to a better electoral process. Working from the top down, we have a chance to make a real difference.

19. (SBU) Politics is a dirty business anywhere in the world, and especially dirty in CIS states. We have no illusion about the November 2006 presidential election. The result is a foregone conclusion. But we firmly believe by working closely with the CCER and the influential SRC (which is increasingly pro-reform) we have the opportunity to correct past electoral problems and to establish as precedents practices that will prove invaluable as democracy evolves in Tajikistan.
HOAGLAND